

Assisted Emigration of Wiltshire Paupers 1834-1848

Nineteenth-century assisted emigration has long been associated with the phrase 'shovelling out paupers'. This view is challenged by the actions and attitudes of the sponsors of parish-assisted emigration who invested considerable time and energy in supporting the emigration of their poor.

Assisted emigration was conceived as a way of helping individual paupers and in a lot of cases whole families while simultaneously displaying a continued concern for the labouring population. Faced with the challenges of the New Poor Law, the farming class viewed assisted emigration as part of an older tradition of paternalistic help for the 'deserving poor'. Sponsors were well aware of the ambivalence of the subject and sought to develop a conscious ideology of assisted emigration, which focused on the hope of a better life, for those who left and for those who remained.

In the county of Wiltshire it was the responsibility of the local Unions to put forward candidates for assisted emigration mainly to Canada and Australia. Records exist in the National Archives at Kew in Class MH12. Several volumes cover up to about 4 years of correspondence each between the Poor Law Commissioners and the Local Poor Law Unions. They can be found first in County and then in Union order. The information found is variable and informative. The volumes also mention some paupers by name who were not part of the Government and Poor Law Commissioners Scheme but were still assisted by the parish to start a new life in the Colonies.

It is possible to extract names of individuals and families who were resettled but would be very time consuming. However there is an overview available that provides information from the Unions of the number of paupers who they assisted and from which parishes they came from. Therefore the table below may assist someone in finding a lost individual or family that do not appear in the 1841 or 1851 census records. Please bear in mind that several parish returns for Wiltshire are lost for the 1841 census (see separate list for those parishes affected).

Parishes from which paupers were assisted to emigrate 1834-1848 extracted from tables found in the volumes as Appendices to Annual Reports of the Poor Law Commissioners 1835, 1836 and 1847-1848

DATE PERIOD	PARISH	NO. OF PAUPERS ASSISTED	DESTINATION
Jul 1838 - April 1839	Bishopstone	56	Canada
April 1841 - January 1842	Bramshaw	6	Canada
January 1842 - December 1842	Bramshaw	6	Canada
1842	Brinkworth	35	Canada
1843	Brinkworth	34	Canada
1847	Brinkworth	18	Canada

1842	Broughton Gifford	5	South Australia
1842	Broughton Gifford	7	Canada
1847	Calne	11	Canada
1843	Charlton	7	Canada
July 1838 - April 1839	Charlton	7	Canada
April 1839 - April 1840	Chilton Foliat	7	South Australia
1844	Christian Malford	9	South Australia
1844	Collingburn Ducis	16	Canada
1847	Donhead St. Mary	5	Canada
April 1839 - April 1840	Donhead St. Mary	3	South Australia
July 1838 - April 1839	Donhead St. Mary	18	Canada
July 1835 - July 1836	Downton	220	Quebec, Canada
July 1835 - July 1836	Durrington	36	Upper Canada
July 1835 - July 1836	Endford	8	Canada
July 1836 - July 1837	Fittleton	14	Upper Canada
Apr 1840 - Apr 1841	Great Bedwin	5	Australia
April 1839 - April 1840	Lea	6	South Australia
Apr 1840 - Apr 1841	Little Bedwin	6	Australia
1846	North Wraxall	7	Canada
1844	Purton	14	Canada
July 1835 - July 1836	Purton	38	Upper Canada
July 1836 - July 1837	Purton	21	Canada
April 1839 - April 1840	South Newton	14	South Australia
July 1835 - July 1836	Whiteparish	45	Upper Canada
1845	Wootton Bassett	7	Canada

This list is by no means a definitive one and is meant to provide a guide to finding potential lost ancestors. Perhaps the ships passengers lists could provide further information.

If anyone has further information they can add to this item please contact Teresa Lewis (Administrator) who will update this information. It would be great to name some if not all of these assisted paupers.